



College Station Comprehensive Plan Update

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

On October 26-27, 2006, a series of small-group interview sessions was conducted as part of the “Discovery and Reconnaissance” phase of our work program as consultant for the College Station Comprehensive Plan Update. These “focus groups” consisted of one-hour discussions between Gary Mitchell, AICP, principal of Kendig Keast Collaborative (or Sean Garretson with TIP Development Strategies for the two Economic Development sessions) and anywhere from 10 to 30 community members in each session. Participants offered their insights and concerns about current conditions in College Station and their ideas and preferences as to how the community will develop over the next 20 years and beyond.

These informal conversations, together with the broader input to be received through the upcoming Citizens Congress on December 4, 2006, will become the foundation of the City’s new long-range plan. The plan is issue-driven, meaning that it began with issues identification, moved into exploration of the nature and cause of these issues, and will result, ultimately, in an expressed deliberate course of action to overcome obstacles and resolve difficulties to achieve the community’s overall vision for the Year 2025.

The following topical sessions were completed over the course of the two days (City staff documented the attendance by session). Some topics were repeated due to greater interest. Concurrent sessions on Transportation and Economic Development were held on Friday.

Thursday, October 26

1. Historic Preservation (9:00 a.m.)
2. Transportation (10:00 a.m.)
3. Growth Management (11:00 a.m.)
4. Parks and Greenways (1:00 p.m.)
5. Land Use & Community Character (2:00 p.m.)
6. Housing & Neighborhoods (3:00 p.m.)

Friday, October 27

7. Growth Management (9:00 a.m.)
8. Economic Development (10:00 a.m.)
9. Transportation (11:00 a.m.)
10. Economic Development (11:00 a.m.)
11. Transportation (1:00 p.m.)
12. Land Use & Community Character (2:00 p.m.)
13. Growth Capacity (3:00)

On the following pages are summary notes from the focus groups, compiled by topic.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Barriers

- Barriers to diversifying the economy have been transportation, no interstate, airport – businesses want to be able to get in and out fast.
- Need to focus on infrastructure needs; don't have the workforce we need, and the ability to get people to and from here is a challenge (i.e., they get stranded at the airport).
- Need to improve airport if you want to bring in more national people and businesses, airport is a need that we as a community have very little control over because it is owned by the university.
- Lacking in urban character and housing appeal. Great place for college, great place to raise a family, but not for those in between. People want to move to downtown, want a townhome. Currently the city lacks character.
- You have a great talent base, but you need to transform College Station (CS) into a cooler community in order to retain youth.

Opportunities

- Need to develop partnerships with Texas A&M University (TAMU).
- Need to keep talent here by diversifying economy.
- Need to recruit commuter-type, full-time jobs with benefits – everything that comes here is part-time, except government.
- Northgate – potential as a “cool” place. City needs to look at what attracts 25-40 year olds.
- Figure out a way to get to Intercontinental Airport in less than an hour.
- Entertainment areas along the creek, tie into amphitheatre, like Market Street in The Woodlands.
- Work with TAMU to tie everything together through a transportation corridor – Northgate, University, creek.
- Bring Northgate back a little, with “live-work” businesses.
- Mall – develop strategy to help retail market become more viable.

GROWTH CAPACITY (Utility Infrastructure & Public Services)

Drainage

- Underbrush needs to be cleared from waterways.
- Problem for those who live near floodplain – when it rains you end up with rivers in people's backyards.
- Police Department – entire back where they store the equipment is built on a pond, so they have to move all vehicles when it rains.
- This is routine, happens every time you get over three inches of rain.
- Water sits for days in areas that do not have curb and gutter.

Water

- Drinking water is disappearing – salt water, desalination plants as an option.

- No plan to go to surface water, sitting on one of the best aquifers, it is recharging, will put a cap on the number of new wells.
- Looking at desalination locally, so it won't be pumped from the Gulf.
- With some conservation measures can get peaking factor down.
- Will start pumping effluent for irrigating playing fields. Can wastewater be used to irrigate boulevards? If you can get it there economically (difficult).
- Don't think it is possible to convince developers to institute water conservation measures until it is necessary.
- City of Coppel uses plants for streetscaping that require very little water.
- Water resource coordinator has worked with the planning department to offer incentives when people use xeriscaping.
- Aquifer is 3,000 feet deep – Region G water planning group (through Texas Water Development Board) has done studies on how much growth this will accommodate.

Wastewater

- Sewage is a concern, extending CNN area in the ETJ.
- Two treatment plants, one at one-quarter capacity and the other at two-thirds capacity.
- City of Bryan is building a plant on the west side, and CS is currently working with them to take some capacity on the west. CS will build a facility on the east to take sludge, so that will increase capacity at Carter Creek.
- There are no developer Municipal Utility Districts (MUDs) in the CS area (but other utility providers).

Police

- Currently have 1.3 officers per 1,000 persons – national standard is 1.7 per 1,000. Currently working with City on their projections and going through five-year plan to see what growth is going to be like.
- Police concerned with area growth and staffing levels that are necessary.
- How do we compare to other cities of our size? When compared to police departments of 24 other cities we were third lowest in terms of staffing levels.

Fire

- Went up 12 percent on calls in 2004; 2005 and 2006 had 20 percent increase.
- Call volumes are up in north-end university area – large opportunity for loss. Need more resources in north, but growing toward the south. So need more fire stations in the south, will have to add more stations (on east side of SH 30).
- Police help with fire emergency response, depends on where the officer is.
- Traffic on SH 6 has increased, improvements on Texas will help.
- Fire Department response-time goal is five minutes – can do that for 95 percent of city, on SH 30 cannot even with the opening of Fire Station 6. Will continue to need connectivity as city grows south, east and west.
- Currently respond all over Brazos County, assist TAMU as needed, do hazardous materials response for the seven counties around us.

Development Impacts and Issues

- Developers install nearly everything – need more strategic thinking on where utilities could be encouraged.
- Developable acres in the school district that have sewer – there is a 15-year supply. What if we extend sanitary sewer beyond the city limits into other school districts?
- Sewer is the key for development, can always get water.
- Oversize participation is great help to developers.
- Have done impact fees in some areas, looking at system-wide impact fees.
- Regional detention has worked in other places, could be an amenity.

School District

- Schools are growing 3.5 percent per year. District waits to see where the kids are going to be and then put the schools there. Growing in K-3 and then staying stagnant.

Other Issues

- Electrical supply – should we offer incentives to encourage efficiency? Currently trying to buy a baseload.
- Have not pulled together all the different service plans.
- All facilities will need to start adding staff to deal with growth, and then you will have to expand facilities.
- Library – need to look at options for expansion.
- Entire array of City services will need to be expanded to accommodate growth – how? City will have new sales tax dollars, but there will be a lag time between that and service provision.
- Need for economic development effort to match what we are doing as a city – we are going after businesses, but we have more people than we can accommodate.
- Right now we are subsidizing TAMU – need a better tax base.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT

Current Growth Patterns and Issues

- CS is a destination and is definitely growing – we need to manage growth but won't be able to shut it off.
- Growing better than we are managing – growth is occurring fast.
- Opportunities for infill – some are being done properly, but there are other opportunities.
- Not doing a good job of managing the growth.
- Despite this we are ending up with a nice community – we have nice neighborhoods.
- Not doing a good job of managing growth outside the city limits – sprawl.
- Redevelopment is more difficult than new development – need to encourage development at the core – this will help problems at the periphery.
- Leaving so many structures empty, it is becoming an eyesore.
- You can't stop growth, so you need to manage it.
- We are trying to control growth; however, the harder you try to control the worse it gets – too much control can pose more problems (like Fairfax VA, Austin).

- Would like to see Bryan get some of the growth, even though they are getting more than they were 10 to 20 years ago.
- Taxpayers are going to have to be aware that they will have bear a burden if they want City to manage growth.

Factors Influencing Growth

- Getting to TAMU – development is going in where the Aggies buy their food, where they live, where they recreate, and how they get to A&M.
- Explosion of growth outside the city limits – at some point these areas may be annexed, so we can't just focus on growth in the city.
- Part of what is happening is beyond our control – we live in the orbit of Houston, Navasota will eventually become a bedroom community for Houston.
- Texas will get a significant amount of growth (15 percent increase over the next decade) – we are in the center of that, that has huge implications for CS. Need to change attitude from growth management to growth accommodation. Need things that will diversify the tax base so we can afford to accommodate the additional growth. How are we going to pay for infrastructure? How are we going to get ahead of the growth curve? How are we going to handle sanitary sewer, drainage basins?
- Why is growth occurring south and not on the other side of the Bypass?
 - Available land for development.
 - Floodplain.
 - School district boundaries (positive perception of College Station ISD).
 - Carter Creek east, Bryan to the north, huge magnet (Houston) to the south.
 - Growing number of people working in/toward Houston.
 - Rail initiative in Houston – all the way to CS? Then we will become the bedroom community of Houston.
- Retiree population – getting more and more of it, already have a weekend home market.
- Increase in student population at TAMU, and it's driving down home prices.
- Population growth due to our location as the hub between population centers in the state. This is a bedroom community that will ultimately expand into Navasota, and the opening of the SH 6 corridor will be the beginning.
- 35-50 years is the bedroom community cohort that can afford the commute and the homes.
- TAMU will continue to grow – need housing and infrastructure to support that.
- Don't want to be an Austin, but there are opportunities along those lines. We are the Research Valley. We do offer a family-oriented community.
- Quality of life is nice, TAMU is good, and some students don't leave; outlying areas impact CS because they commute in and spend their money here.
- Huge drop in property values as you cross the school district line to the south into Navasota.
- Very family-oriented town, and the City is good about supporting that. The schools are very good. Families choose to come here because of the school district. There are several types of growth: TAMU, retirees, families, etc. The issue is when and where they intersect with one another. They are each looking for something different.

- Population growth (professionals) outstrips student population growth. Issue is the commercial developers who see opportunity and flood the market with types of development that does not have the growth to sustain it and it crashes.
- Would like to see some focus on the types of development that is being encouraged to come here – not necessarily all retail, need more higher-paying jobs so that people don't have to commute.
- There seems to be tremendous loyalty to the area – people want to give back to the community.
- B-CS essentially functions as a single entity. They feed off each other, and there should be a higher degree of cooperation.
- TAMU is the engine that drives the community. Surprised by some lack of accommodations made for students.

Growth Management Tools

- Zoning in the city, subdivision regulation, thoroughfare plan, utilities plans and extension policies, and impact fees are the major tools for growth management.
- Problem is looking to tools without looking at the comprehensive plan, which is the policy. For example, policy was to increase densities around university; however, every time we tried we were met with resistance, so the tool must be flawed or the City is not meeting it.
- There are areas where higher densities would work (e.g., area behind Bank of America). City needs to take the initiative and pursue this policy in targeted areas.
- Smart growth includes neighborhood connectivity, higher density, neighborhood commercial; however, whenever those items are proposed neighborhoods complain and then it falls to pieces.
- Need to make core development attractive because City doesn't have as much control in the ETJ.
- If the City changes zoning over time it will change the course of development.
- As a community we have required the builders to build infrastructure, with the City reimbursing 30 percent of the cost. The City should take the lead in building infrastructure where they want to see commercial and residential development.
- Need for balanced growth not smart growth. Have to have growth to keep the engine of City government going. How do we balance growth in terms of economic development, and who is going to pay for everything?
- Annexation – the City will begin to develop a three-year annexation plan as required by statute. Tremendous amount of pressure for development just outside the city limits. Concern over ability of City to aggressively annex and afford cost of providing traditional city services.
- Need to have a long-range annexation plan that is more visionary.

What Tools Are Not Being Used

- Want to protect the quality of life here. Need to think about the pace of consumption of land. Can't walk anywhere here – and that will continue to erode the quality of life. Mixed use is not a dirty word, and looking at other medium-sized cities around the state can provide solutions. Add walkability to the mix. Where will open space go? Is anyone thinking long term?
- Concerned about the City becoming very linear along Texas Avenue. Need annexation to provide for another 2818 out east. Concerned about all the strip malls going up with three to four stores empty – how many barber shops and nail shops can you handle?
- Planning & Zoning is more loyal to developers than to the residents. Recommendations that come to City Council seem to focus on ways to accommodate the developers.

- Enforcing comprehensive plan and zoning regulations is a matter of political will. Also developers run to Austin to complain about local regulations. Cities need to be more aggressive with the state legislature too.
- Walkability sounds good, but people are not going to use it – no one is going to walk to the grocery store in the dead of summer. People want more police/fire protection – where does that money come from?
- Not true – survey done last year shows a consensus among students that those who can walk places do. South of Rock Prairie people are living next to commercial properties. Just because it's hot people still walk.
- City is behind in annexation. Growth here is in many directions – have infill in small areas throughout the city.
- Are rules in place? Mixed use was in place for some time, but there has to be a change in the mindset. There's a lack of consensus.
- Taking tracts that need infill, for example – only the 10% who complain show up. Few show up to support the City.
- Public transportation – cannot have an all-car solution. There are regional plans under way at the Council of Governments (COG), but there must be solutions at a reasonable price. How many students use the buses now? Where do you spend your money?
- As the community meets a certain threshold the focus is not on public transportation but on where are people when they get off the bus? Do they have to get in the car? The two highest public transit users are seniors and students.
- Projects around town need to be more pedestrian friendly. Need more sidewalks for example.

What is Working Well

- Some of the redevelopment at George Bush and Texas has been good. Culpepper Plaza is due for redevelopment. City should encourage some smaller developments – don't need massive developments.
- What about vertical development? Is that being encouraged? Land is so cheap here there's no incentive. Northgate is the only area where two stories is required in all three sections, and that is tough. Driven by the economy.
- Didn't move here to be in the city – could stay in Houston for that. Want to have a yard and place for kids to run. Want a little space. Developers are essentially building what we evidently want.
- The majority of developers here live here. A lot of them want multi-modal mixed use. Most of our planning staff lives here too. The old comprehensive plan was not great, and it's been too long since the last update. Maybe cluster development is a good option that should be considered.
- B-CS is the regional hub for the Hearnese, Navasotas, etc. – because we want those dollars to support our City services. Some regional economic development is necessary with some scale – residential development is not enough to expand the tax base.

Other

- South of George Bush Drive – someone bought a home for \$300K and then tore it down.
- Why is growth occurring in the county? One factor is the difficulty of getting projects done where the City controls them – if it were easier you might see more development. Need to change the development process – outside the city is always easier because there are hardly any regulations.

- There are opportunities within the city center that will help the city grow. The City should encourage appropriate development through city-initiated zoning changes and street abandonment. Make the city more attractive for development, and give developers/businesses a good place to build.
- We have good staff in the planning department; however, the process is difficult – for example, staff is working with ordinances that were written 20 or 30 years ago. Ordinances and standards need to be consistent and easy to interpret.
- Development process – partly a function of the number of people, also a function of updated ordinances – subdivision ordinance needs to be in line with Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). Need to be holistic – right now have too much stuff in the system.
- More seniors are relocating to CS – it would be nice to see a senior community here.
- Growth management does not mean Texas Avenue.
- Growth management needs metrics – they disappear here when they don't bode well for the developers.
- We need to think about how the natural environment affects us.
- Disagree completely with limited housing developments – open ourselves up to fraud.
- Need easy access to Texas Avenue – that brings people here from outside the City.
- What happens to old apartment complexes in the inner city? Are we creating a donut hole?
- Need to look at loft apartments in Bryan as examples.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

- “Heritage Conservation” is a better term.

Overlooked Assets

- Homes – more broadly neighborhoods, neighborhood integrity.
- Parks.
- Business preservation – older buildings.

Historic Resources at Risk

- Need historic conservation focus to form our identity – great place to raise a family but there's a lot more that people are missing. We have parks and places in the city that have a story that people are missing. We have a tendency to bulldoze.
- We need to identify what we have – our database needs some attention. Not only TAMU involved, but the schools aren't doing a good job of teaching through history. TAMU has done a better job within the past five years of identifying their resources, and there is now a master plan so it'll stop tearing down its own resources.
- Don't feel that people value older homes out on South Knoll – it's an area in limbo. Developers keep pushing you out to tear down and build new. The significance of homes that are 60, 70 years old is important.

Specific Areas Where Preservation is a Particular Concern

- A few months ago the City Council and the Historic Conservation Committee took a tour of homes that had been moved off campus – there is a great deal of interest.
- It's not just what was there in 1938, but CS has an identity – because of the neighborhoods. New residents have no ties to the neighborhoods – Foxfire has a distinct identity and should be valued

as much as the South Knoll neighborhood, but in different ways. CS has a broader identity than TAMU.

- Cypress Meadow south of Rock Prairie – there's a transitory nature to the community.

Lessons Learned

- The historic preservation should be connected visually – unified design style where things are tied together so that people as they tour through town should be able to grasp the identity of the community. There's no downtown but there are pockets scattered around that need to be connected.
- Don't need each franchise at your doorstep – sprawl does not lead to a community's identity.
- Mayor Boswell planted 5,000 live oaks to be distributed throughout the community. Brazos Beautiful made an effort to plant crepe myrtles. No one knows the story of how those efforts came about.
- There's a tree on Munson Drive that dictated the flow of traffic because the City didn't want to cut it down.
- Bryan had a head start because they had a downtown. Lee Street is an issue because of the huge homes going in next to historic homes that are 50+ years old.
- Under the City's program, the owner requests the historic designation and it's a process that is entered into a database. It's just a recognition at this time.
- Does the City need to take it further? Many of the older neighborhoods do not have neighborhood associations. Without the resident interests – the City would allow inconsistent uses such as a duplex going into an historic neighborhood. The architectural committee has done some good, but the City identifies historic buildings as those that are 50 years old. South Knoll is a limbo area because they're not quite 50 years, but they are of value.

Strategies Outside College Station

- In New England there's an effort to save the old buildings.
- Bryan has done a wonderful job of preserving their downtown.

Other

- There should be more stringent guidelines for development in older residential neighborhoods.
- We do have Northgate – there are some restrictions/regulations in place, but there needs to be a balance. That's the closest thing we'll have to a traditional downtown. Trying to give businesses an opportunity to expand as needed and not cause economic challenges to the businesses.
- College Hills/Eastgate – TAMU drives this community, and with them attempting to preserve their history the City should follow suit.
- City neighborhood lunches sponsored by the City and historic preservation committee. They happen 10 months out of the year and are filled each month – they're "marvelous." It's an opportunity for people to connect with each other. They are scanning old newspapers and other artifacts.
- Need education for newcomers to the community.
- There is a museum group forming for the Brazos Valley.
- HOLD – Historic Online Database. Effort to compile any and every aspect of CS life.
- People should make more effort to be neighborly. It's hard to get to know each other.

HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

This Comprehensive Plan will not be Effective if it Fails to Confront ...

- Affordability.
- Code enforcement and the volume of renters in the community.
- Rental properties in College Hills and other places – how can the City better deal with renters?
- College Park – maintaining the character of the town; Oak Park is building “McMansions” out to the lot line, and concerned that it will occur in College Park; there are no deed restrictions and no neighborhood associations in this area.
- Character and identity.
- Criminal activity – ordinance violations.
- Rental registration – difficult to determine who owns the house so that code enforcement could be accomplished.
- There are a lot of areas that are in transition, underutilized, and in need of redevelopment.
- Neighborhoods are the backbone of this community.
- There must be a way to prevent every house from becoming a rental house that is not cared for.
- Pershing Park – parking on the streets; parking on Anderson near the soccer fields was a nightmare; Pershing and Shetland and now four trucks park there overnight and it makes life difficult.
- Integrity, neighborhood planning, code enforcement.
- Overall traffic and parking throughout older residential neighborhoods.

Specific Areas Where Housing Issues are of Greatest Concern?

- Code enforcement – a violation notice is mailed to the owner, but no one follows up to see if the issue was resolved.
- Rental properties, parents buying homes for students.
- In one neighborhood homeowners made it clear to real estate agents that if they showed properties for rent the residents would not be giving them their business.
- Noise is a \$395 fine, the second time is a \$595 fine and a trip to jail. It's effective.
- Northgate – the noise ordinances are not effective because they get ticketed as a nuisance issue not a noise issue (even though they monitor their own noise).
- College Hills – try to send a packet each time someone moves in to spell out what is expected of them. The president of the group is a realtor and tracks it.
- Wolf Pen – out of 48 units, 20 are students, and we are ringed by homes with dogs that bark endlessly and it's difficult to control.
- We are upside-down in our ordinances – for example, trash pickup; the owner becomes the bad guy versus the renter, who should be fined unless it is explicitly spelled out in the lease agreement.

Other

- Affordable housing – on a national level we're not riddled with red tape and we're extremely affordable; there are some neat, nice opportunities, but you have to get on the outskirts to do it; infill is too difficult.

- Courting new businesses takes precedence over the folks that are already here (for example, Lincoln Avenue and the traffic signal being moved to Barnes & Noble). Which economic development takes priority – new or old?
- Thoroughfare planning – badly needed here – cannot comprehensively plan without one.
- Comprehensive planning needs to be followed up with neighborhood planning to drill down to the next level.
- Encourage diversity of housing stock – lots of single-family development.
- Need townhomes/duplexes near campus – very little zoning around to support it.
- “Game Day” development in Northgate – intended as high-end condos that will not allow students (geared toward alumni).

LAND USE & COMMUNITY CHARACTER

This Comprehensive Plan will not be Effective if it Fails to Confront ...

- Quality of life.
- Growth.
- Compatibility of neighborhoods.
- Cultural diversity in population.
- Code enforcement and drainage – additional codes are not the solution.
- Neighborhoods.
- Maintain the rural edge of CS.
- Control of growth.
- Character.
- Must define quality of life somewhere in the plan – means different things to different people.
- Neighborhood integrity.
- Preservation of the natural environment – tree protection.
- Traffic.
- Long-term growth.
- Connectivity of the community.
- Where we want our businesses.

Recent Developments You Have Liked

- Corner of George Bush and Texas Avenue (Bed Bath and Beyond center) – the parking lot is not so overbearing, parking is on roof.
- Wolf Pen Creek – has a sense of neighborhood.
- New extension of Wolf Pen Creek Park – would be ideal if whole city was surrounded by floodplain where you could prohibit development.
- Growth of hotels and restaurants has been good for city.
- Restaurant area on University; however, would like to see parking in the back so it is more of a walking and pedestrian area – put entrances on the parking side.
- Parks.
- TAMU.

- Bikeway at Bee Creek Park and Wolf Pen Creek, but they missed some opportunities there.
- Historic District just south of the campus across George Bush.
- Northgate – it's in flux but contributes some unique character (The Deluxe no longer there).

Recent Developments You Have Not Liked

- Removed greenery in widening Texas Avenue.
- Trees are all gone (for example, Courtyard Hotel at Rock Prairie and Bypass).
- Maybe it's an issue of utilities and where the City's regulations require they be placed – but lots of examples to draw from around the state of how development occurs without sacrificing vegetation.
- Disagreement about what thoughtful planning means – town centers versus sprawling commercial development.

Types of Development You Would Like to See

- Would like something to mark the center of city, like fountains.
- Would like to see more planned-unit, mixed-use developments. Use floodplain to establish clear-cut boundaries.
- Would like a tree-lined roadway like SH 6 in Sugar Land. Problem is the type of trees here – any development near them kills the trees, so it is not always possible.
- Need to screen existing facilities like Home Depot.
- Would like to see more hedges around developments.
- Need for more redevelopment – should not just use trees to hide how ugly our buildings are – instead we need to look at redevelopment.
- Look at form-based zoning code – offer opportunity to determine character so uses will blend into existing character.
- Use other incentives like tax incentives to encourage redevelopment (Culpepper Plaza).
- For neighborhoods there should be some type of incentive to upgrade.
- Green architecture that encourages less energy consumption – this needs to be aggressively approached.
- Need for redevelopment instead of new development – development should occur inside the city limits.
- Emerald Forest and 2818 – don't want to see the lake go away. Hope City can buy as City Center with restaurants, no big box, not strip malls – ideal area for business park or shopping center.
- 2818 on the west side – potential for nonresidential.
- Think regionally about future development as there are a lot of brownfields in Bryan that would be appropriate for industrial development.
- Look at infill for industrial, but not at the edge of city as the edge offers a nice buffer.
- Residential development – currently there are no requirements for landscaping – some developers care, some don't.
- Would like to see a neighborhood conservation clause in the code (like Bryan).
- Bryan's overlay is working.
- Redevelopment in Eastgate – redevelopment is just as important as development.
- Rural edge – must be maintained.

- Need to be planning for a certain look.
- Need to identify areas for new development while preserving the old.

Barriers/Obstacles

- Vermont is not a fair comparison because it's a different animal here. About one out of three residents is a student – we are a college community.
- What about large master-planned communities? The pattern here is smaller lots with older residences purchased in what was then suburban with expectation to stay suburban. Citizens of older neighborhoods do not want to lose that.
- Mixed use adjacent to residential (for example, Central Market in Austin).
- We don't have ordinances in place to facilitate tree preservation or planting of more trees.
- Allowed neighborhoods to go in 300 feet off of major arterials. Now we have to deal with people who don't want to carry the burden of the uses. We already have these pods around town (for example, east side of town).
- Residents need to accept the fact that development around their neighborhoods is inevitable. The codes need to be rewritten.
- We want to be CS, not Austin or Georgetown – but must think big picture when it comes to our codes. We are about to get another influx of additional students and will feel that ripple effect.
- Largest demographic we'll experience in the next five years is retiring Aggies.

PARKS & GREENWAYS

Best Things City has Done in Recent Years related to Parks and Recreation

- Have 42 projects this year (\$17M) – just approved park #51, approaching 1,300 acres of parkland.
- Upper side of Wolf Pen Creek.
- Number of parks.
- Quality of the parks – forethought of the parks staff and City.
- Trails.
- Improving and expanding the facilities in the parks.
- Central Park – good efforts.
- Edelweiss – very well used.
- Thomas and Central Parks – provide lots of facilities at a single location.
- Dynamic – wide range of ages/users.
- Shade structures.
- City is very proactive with their parks, and they reflect that.
- Neighborhood parks – City goes around to residents and asks what they'd like to see in a park before they implement; also 80-90% are within walking distance to most neighborhood parks.
- Veteran's Park – can be an economic draw for the City, moved to phase 2B ahead of schedule.
- Walking paths/trails at most parks.
- Every subdivision has to have a park at time of approval.
- Leadership in City staff and elected official – recognize the long-term value.
- The beginnings of a network between the parks.

- They're growing like crazy.

Greatest Deficiency

- More "pet friendly" parks – Steeplechase Park is a dedicated space, also Lake Creek.
- Would like to see more pools – not a new one since 1988; multiple uses at parks would be nice.
- Lots of kids are not involved in formal sports; would like to see a skate park.
- Lap lane availability for seniors; don't think you should be able to rent a public pool.
- Interpretive trails (trees, vegetation) – we're losing track of our sense of place.
- Would like to see an urban park area – open mall or public gathering spaces; on the plans for Northgate, but not there yet.
- Would like to see more natural areas – more trees.
- Greenway planning tends to be an exercise in watershed management – Wolf Pen Creek is beautiful but it's in a backyard – would like more "front yard" spaces.
- More mini parks/pocket parks.
- Denver's greenbelt system is a fine example of a comprehensive system.
- Use a bufferyard for park space between different residential densities.
- Greenways have been a touchy subject here: What constitutes a greenway and who can own one? Permitted activities in greenways? Joint use of greenways by precluding them as park space.
- Parks are expensive and we must determine who will pay for them.
- No park requirements in the ETJ – have to purchase it outright. That's how Central Park and Lake Creek were acquired, otherwise they would have been lost.

Barriers

- Greenways are split between public works and parks/recreation departments – need them to work together.
- What happens in the ETJ? – Timberline is one of the most beautiful drives in the county.
- Greenways need to be incorporated into the plan ahead of time.
- No advance acquisition in place – have done some item-by-item acquisition in the past but not a comprehensive plan.
- Concerned about the pattern of residential development – City will have more greenways than they know what to do with due to development occurring in the floodplain. This goes back to determining a definition of a greenway.
- University/Texas/2818/George Bush/Harvey – few to no safe crossing points for cyclists.
- Tree ordinances and setbacks should be pursued – would like to see the ordinances beefed up in this regard.
- 77 acres in the ETJ were developed to build 330 homes – every tree on the 77 acres was removed. Without a county population of 700,000, the County has no authority.

Features Lacking in Current Park System

- City cannot develop connectivity soon enough.
- CS has a well-defined edge now – concern that we must maintain that rural edge by focusing on infill opportunities.
- Bicycling is an afterthought. There are not safe crossings for cyclists. Demanding more from developers would be proactive.

- Need to focus on developing a network to hold the community together.

Other

- Park initiative between Grimes and Brazos County for a 10,000-acre park facility.
- An arterial intersecting a freeway, where Home Depot went in, is encroaching upon the floodplain – the thoroughfare plan needs to respect the greenway system.
- CS has a sister city (Bryan), and they don't always play well together. CS has been proactive in the past, and citizens would like them to go to the next level.
- Need to decide what type of economic development they want.
- Parks are as fundamental as streets and infrastructure.

TRANSPORTATION

Bike/Pedestrian/Transit Issues and Improvements

- Roads are not wide enough to cycle safely, and intersections are not safe.
- Major challenges crossing over Bypass because bridges are not bike friendly.
- Bicycle routes needed for park-to-park recreation; however, there is a need for those who are using it to go to work.
- Need to accommodate two types of users of bike facilities: those that use roadways/paths to commute to destinations and those that use paths/trails for recreational purposes.
- Access roads on Bypass were usable before they were improved (could ride on shoulder), now there are curbs so you can't ride your bike.
- Need bike paths that are separate from both cars and pedestrians.
- Transportation rights-of-ways should include roads, bicycle lanes and sidewalks.
- Also need to account for school kids; right now bicyclists are using the sidewalks not the bike lanes because they are not safe.
- Crossing Texas Avenue by bike is a safety issue because there is car recognition but no bike recognition at the traffic light.
- On campus the underpass is wonderful – the old overpass didn't work.
- Public transportation is a good solution (light rail, buses).
- General public can ride the TAMU transit system, but does it go where they need to go?
- There are a lot of bikers that use the east Bypass, and therefore there is an opportunity for bike connections to Wolf Pen Creek.
- Need good community planning so kids can walk/bike to the park, school.
- Bikeway system is relatively good – as an alternative transportation system.
- The bikes still have to compete with cars to get across Texas and University to get to campus.
- George Bush and Wellborn – TxDOT does have funds to put in a grade separation eventually for bikes/pedestrians. Everything lags behind 10-15 years before projects hit the ground.
- Bikes need to abide by traffic rules.
- Northgate is beginning to make progress for pedestrian traffic.

Roadway/Intersection Improvements

- Lack of north/south corridors.

- Longmire Drive and Rock Prairie.
- Deacon and Longmire (waiting at the lights when there are no cars).
- Synchronization of lights on University, Texas Avenue.
- Munson, Dartworth, Harvey – could be a great pedestrian and thoroughfare corridor.
- Wellborn Road.
- Rock Prairie and Wellborn Road.
- Have proposed a project to the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to interconnect signals on state system – this will happen in the coming years.
- Southwest Parkway at the Bypass – need for traffic signalization here, going east you have a traffic light at Dartmouth.
- Late at night lights should go to blinking red.
- Overgrown trees on sidewalks forces people to walk in streets.
- Lincoln – there are bike lanes; however, when you get to the duplexes it stops because of parking, and then starts again. There is no serious consideration for bike lanes.
- Intersections are really a problem for bikes; bike boxes elsewhere in country allow bikes to make a left turn.
- Rock Prairie and Highway 6.
- Going north to Rock Prairie, traffic backs up.
- Stonebrook at Rock Prairie (traffic, turning movements and intersection).
- Emerald Forest and Highway 6.
- Traffic on Munson, result of a system that lacks north/south roadways to travel.
- 2818 by the high school – getting kids safely across (no medians, crosswalks).
- Holleman and Texas Avenue.
- Grade separation at 2818 and railroad will be implemented next December.
- College Station ISD: getting into neighborhoods is not a problem, coming out of the neighborhoods is difficult. Up to 10% of the budget can be used for hazardous conditions (for example, Barron Road – two schools on Barron and kids cannot cross the road). Need to see more connectivity.
- Nantucket – difficult to pick up kids because of high-speed traffic.
- Munson – speed – it's a cut-through.
- Forest Bridge School on Barron Road is backed up because parents drop off kids (they can't walk to school due to traffic).
- All development inhibits connectivity – still only three to four ways north-south and three to four ways east-west. Limited alternatives, therefore there is congestion. Every street should be a minor collector with sidewalks.
- Fine and good for new development but not for older neighborhoods. Should be able to come home and not feel intruded upon by traffic. Kids should be able to play in the front yards – it's wrong to take a neighborhood that's been there 20-25 years and seek connectivity options.
- Community attitude has always been reactive not proactive. Traffic plan should be in place well in advance including the ETJ. Plan should be updated every five years – 10 years is not enough. We have not had a viable plan/system for some time. Development is way ahead of the City's

thought process. One of the key ways a city can encourage/discourage growth is through a transportation plan.

- Did put in traffic calming along Dexter that works.
- Traffic enforcement by the Police Department is good.
- City uses quality traffic signal system equipment.

Thoroughfare Plan

- Major sections of the thoroughfare plan have been changed because of development.
- Thoroughfare plan is being implemented now.
- The thoroughfare plan establishes an overall picture, unfortunately it changes because of development.
- Shouldn't negotiate splitting roads with developers, need to preserve right-of-way.
- Include a strong statement that City and City Council cannot ignore thoroughfares on plan.

Land Use and Transportation Planning

- Cut-through traffic through older neighborhoods is a problem.
- Don't want new thoroughfares cutting through neighborhoods, need to preserve neighborhood integrity.
- Design the community to minimize reliance on automobile to get everywhere – i.e., through mixed-use developments.
- Mixed-use developments – people don't believe it until it is there, so maybe make one corridor a pilot, identify a target area and try to demonstrate that it works. One potential area could include the Wolf Pen Creek and Harvey Road area. Look at transit possibilities (i.e., like Portland street car or light rail, currently buses are packed, they leave people behind because they are so full).
- CS has done a good job with Wolf Pen Creek corridor.
- Not going to have the mixed-use development if you attract the franchises, with parking lots out front. European cities have plazas; however, if you don't restrict franchises this won't happen.
- Where major roads come together there is pressure for commercial development – this generates pollutants that go into drainage system. Old thoroughfare plan did not take into account natural constraints. The new plan should take into account natural constraints, and new intersections should be located away from floodplain.
- CS has grown and has had to rely on arterials that are now inadequate. Munson-Dartmouth was designed to discourage cut-through traffic but it doesn't do that. Need a plan to allow for future traffic loads. Collectors are serving as arterials. Should be on a half-mile grid. People need to know that there's a 200-foot right-of-way. Barron Road is a good example – the right-of-way should have been bought years ago.

Other

- Not interested in traveling faster in the city. University near Northgate can have narrower lanes, with a median, and everyone's quality of life would go up. The number of cars there does dictate quality of life.
- Need transportation planning for special events. Looking for creative ways to handle traffic because of football games and other special events.
- No plans to add more on-campus housing – more students are going to be living off campus and we need to accommodate them.

- Converting Foxfire Drive into a collector will redefine the neighborhood – making the street larger than what it should be changes the character of the neighborhood.
- Should include question about bicycle usage on community survey.
- Community relies heavily on the comprehensive plan with a 10-year horizon. Could we think in a 30-year horizon for a traffic plan?
- The right-of-way on 2818 shows tremendous foresight but now may not be needed because it was planned as a freeway, but that is no longer where we need a freeway. 2818 is one of the few streets where you can get somewhere through town.
- Expansion on the Bypass will be to six lanes instead of four and the widened bridges out near the mall. The ramps will change from a diamond pattern to an “X” pattern.
- Is TAMU transit just for students, or is it open to anyone who wants to go to the University or the mall? Brazos Valley Transit does a lot of coordination that people do not see. They have nine buses now that are shared between B-CS – could use 30 buses because of the large apartment complexes going in.
- The railroad is an asset. Lots of big development going in. Railroad should stay.
- Transportation system is designed to fail twice a day.
- Older schools are located off major routes; new schools have access from a major road, which creates traffic flow problems. Access needs to be far enough off the roads that queues do not back up into traffic.
- Rock Prairie Road widening is good.
- Kudos on working with Bryan and TxDOT for the timing of the lights to move people through morning commutes.
- South of Olson Field – City has put in two or three roads to funnel traffic off George Bush – it helps alleviate backup onto George Bush.
- We have exceptional City staff, but the difficulty is using staff in processing rather than planning. Not fully utilizing the talent of the staff.
- The City should work with other communities to find examples of where traffic issues have been successfully addressed in other places.